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ABSTRACT

This report presents a vision statement and educational goals for Northeast Missouri State University that were developed by the university's student senate, as well as specific recommendations to implement and achieve the vision and goals. The report focuses on: (1) the restructuring of the liberal arts and sciences core curriculum and the possible move to four credit hour classes; (2) the strengthening of undergraduate and graduate programs through improved academic advising, published course evaluations, and increased efforts to combat grade inflation; (3) the publication and dissemination of student, faculty, and institutional evaluations, as well as the tracking of the university's graduates; (4) the improvement and renovation of university facilities, such as the library, various academic buildings, the student recreation center, and residence halls; (5) increased access to advanced technology, such as computers; (6) the improvement of student services, including health, career counseling, personal counseling, student government, and food services; (7) the expansion of the "residence colleges" dormitory program and the need for increased on-campus housing; and (8) the need to maintain current levels of enrollment, address student alienation, and encourage the input of students, faculty, alumni, and administrators. (Contains 13 references.) (MDM)

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ED 387 044

# *Challenges for a New Era*

## Student Senate's Vision for the Future of the University

Submitted to President Jack Magruder
By the 1994-95 Student Senate
April 1995

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Northeast Missouri State University

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# *Foreword*

This document, in the tradition of Continuing A Renaissance, forwards **Student**Senate's long-range Vision for the future of the University. It is our intention that this work, like its predecessor, will spark a healthy dialogue between the student body and the University at-large. Such an open exchange of ideas and information will provide a strong framework for future decisions, and the University will benefit accordingly. As this formal process of exchange leads to improvements in the institution, we hope future **Student**Senates will continue the tradition established by the two Vision committees and create additional long-range planning documents as the need arises.

The process used to create this document included a steady stream of input from students through the Vision Forum, focus group meetings, assessment data, and survey data. University publications such as the 1995 North Central Association Self-Study Report, the University Master Plan 1995-2002, and the Liberal Arts and Sciences Task Force Report were instrumental in providing a context for this document. Chapter drafts were provided to Student Senators and student focus groups and refined many times over in an effort to forward our objectives as completely and clearly as possible.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank the many individuals who made this document possible through their fine work. This begins with the **Student**Senate Vision Committee itself, consisting of Nick Clayton, Amy DeBaets, Ryan Donovan, Darin Henderson, Lisa Kays, Sara Ramlo, Jenny Reilly, Danny Rotert, Julie Strebler, and Jeffrey Weiland--their continuous support and input allowed us to cover a great amount of ground as expeditiously as possible. A wide assortment of individual students provided invaluable suggestions and feedback, including both the Dobson and Centennial Hall Peer Academic Counselors as well as those forty-plus attending the Vision Forum. The assistance of both Rebecca Ems and Kristi Stahlman contributed greatly to the incorporation of assessment data into the document. The friendly and open manner in which faculty, staff, and administration went out of their way to provide specialized information to committee members both enhanced the document and exemplified a great strength of our University. Lastly, we would like thank the **Student**Senate, President Jenny Reilly, and former President Joseph Bambenek for the strong support and inspiration they provided us.

This University, uncommon in its character and quality, has played a central role in each of our lives over the past few years. As students at Northeast, we have been blessed with the opportunity to make a difference for the better at our school in a manner unfathomable at many other institutions. While our tenure as students may be brief and our efforts relatively

contained accordingly, the strengths of the University shall endure to provide future students with the benefits of our labor; much as we now benefit from the efforts of previous students. The efforts of faculty, staff, administration, and students over the past quarter century transformed Northeast into a truly special place--it is our hope that this document may in some way contribute to the future success of an institution that has so greatly contributed to ours.

Phil Christofferson
Vision Document Editor

Scott Sifton
Vision Document Author

# *The Impetus*

When Joseph Bambenek and his contemporaries set forth in 1990 to assemble the original Vision document, they engaged in a process of collecting student thoughts, perspectives, and ideals regarding the University. The results of these efforts were then compiled and expressed to a broad audience within and beyond the University Community in a relatively simple yet highly effective manner. Moreover, a coherent vision for the future of the institution from the student perspective was presented for the first time, and its impacts were far-reaching. Continuing A Renaissance clearly established a new benchmark in student participation in, and student impact upon, a broad range of issues faced by the University.

The work of the original Vision committee left a significant legacy for both the Student Association and the University as a whole–one that future **Student**Senates will continue building upon. Motivations for producing a new Vision document are numerous–however, the passage of time drives most of them. Many of the proposals advanced in the original Vision document came to fruition while others lost their meaning as the University grew. Other recommendations, though articulated fully four years ago, retain their importance and merit reassertion. It stands as perhaps the most powerful testament to the effectiveness of the document that its success inevitably necessitated its replacement.

Other factors compel **Student**Senate to produce a new Vision document at this time. The year 1995 marks the end of a historic re-accreditation cycle for the University, a decade that witnessed wholesale transformation of the institution. The 1985 mission change sparked a number of institution-wide changes, most of which were achieved some time ago or are nearing completion now. This reality fosters the sense that an extended period of sweeping change at the core of the University will soon give way to a new era of continuous improvement upon the institution's strong new foundation. The University is no longer in its infancy as a Liberal Arts and Sciences institution; it has matured in its new mission and is ready to become something ever greater. Moreover, a New Era in the University's development warrants a new long-range planning document from the student perspective.

As we look to the future, the continued need for students to play a direct and integral role in the University's future is evident. We remain grateful for the opportunity the University affords us to participate in its future, and take great pride in its many successes. At the brink of a New Era in the University's life, we stand resolved to meet the Challenges lying before the institution.

# *The Vision*

## THE VISION

A unique and outstanding Public Liberal Arts and Sciences University should provide an atmosphere where exceptional students incorporate the ideals of a liberal education into their lives. It should be a place where diverse students interact with motivated faculty to create a community of learners. A feeling of community should pervade the University in order to create a sense of understanding and shared purpose within the University. Students and faculty alike should be consumed with a drive for the inquiry of truth, knowledge, and understanding.

The resources of the University should be directed toward facilitating a Liberal Arts and Sciences Education. The University should provide students with the opportunity to develop their ability to think, to discover the interrelation and interdependence that exists between seemingly unrelated items and ideas, to achieve a high level of competency in a myriad of topics, to gain a thorough and nationally competitive understanding of their discipline, to enhance interpersonal skills, and to establish and clarify personal values and beliefs.

The University Community will then give back to society graduates who will tackle Society's greatest challenges. Through a thorough understanding of their discipline, they will conquer lingering problems and explore new Challenges. With the perspective of a liberal education, they will ensure the responsible use of their developments and inquiries.

–Joseph J. Bambenek

# *The Core Curriculum*

The Liberal Arts and Sciences Core curriculum exposes every Northeast student to an array of learning opportunities across varied disciplines. This includes a grounding in the Essential Skills critical for success in both the academic environment and contemporary society, development of Modes of Inquiry within assorted perspectives, and learning to make connections and comparisons both within and across such perspectives. As the Liberal Arts and Sciences Core stands at the center of the University's mission and comprises a sizable portion of every Northeast graduate's background and training, its values, strengths and weaknesses strongly reflect those of the University. As an integral component of the University's foundation, the Core Curriculum must continuously provide new challenges to high-ability students and instill in them values and experiences consistent with the goals of a Liberal Arts and Sciences education.

**Academic Core Restructuring**

The current Liberal Arts and Sciences core was developed as an early step towards implementing the University's new mission. While the core served its purpose well in establishing a base from which to move forward, it was never intended or understood to be permanent. The University in recent years began addressing the question of what changes, if any, in the substance of and philosophy behind the core would strengthen the institution's Liberal Arts and Sciences mission. The Liberal Arts and Sciences Task Force Report represented a major first step in the direction of revising core requirements, a process that should continue as a broad, community-wide dialogue including students, faculty, and administration.

The present discussion entertains not only marginal modifications in class offerings and requirements but also sweeping changes in the philosophical underpinnings of the core structure. Diverse Curricular Proposals each feature fundamentally different approaches to liberal education. The goal of the current discussion should be to sort through the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, including the current core, and to synthesize a new system that will further and more permanently define the meaning of a Liberal Arts and Sciences education at Northeast Missouri State University.

To this end, the University Community should take great pains to consider as many alternatives as possible for the new core. If a four credit-by-four class system such as that proposed by members of the English Department is to be considered, now is clearly the time. If assessment instruments are to be imbedded in core classes, now is the time. Now is the time for discussion of any substantial alteration of "true core" classes, of entirely new classes such as discussed in the proposed calculus requirement, of limiting the size of the core, and of any other issues or proposals pertaining to the core. Outcomes of the current dialogue should set the tone for the University's Liberal Arts and Sciences Curriculum for the foreseeable future.

One parameter should be placed on the core discussion--the need to contain the size of the required curriculum should be a strong consideration in all future revisions. The 1992 CBHE Visit Team Report, the original **Student**Senate Continuing A Renaissance document, and other student input all indicate that the number of rigid core requirements should be reduced. While the following discussion will highlight specific needed requirements, all efforts should be made to maintain or decrease the number of courses needed to complete the core curriculum.

## Orientation

The initial experience common to all Northeast students occurs during orientation, presently administered through the Freshman Week Experience and special course offerings for transfer students. Incoming students should receive a thorough introduction to the University's mission, values, facilities, practices, policies, and expectations.

While diversity and innovation in freshman seminar sections should certainly be encouraged, students indicate a desire for greater uniformity among these sections in focus groups, the Freshman Week Survey, and student forums. Producing a set range of possible class activities, including a heavy emphasis on exposure to various aspects of University life such as the Liberal Arts and Sciences mission, the assessment program, and the Student Judicial System, as well as a lessened emphasis on academic material, would avoid the highly arbitrary differences experienced by students in different Freshman Week sections.

**Essential Skills in the New Core**

Essential Skills are those that must be developed by all Liberal Arts and Sciences students. They include proficiency in both written and oral communication, analytical and quantitative reasoning, and, in the modern economy, familiarity and proficiency with computer technology. These skill areas form the basis from which all other inquiry and learning proceeds, as they are incorporated into every other aspect of the curriculum and, indeed, society. Various approaches exist to ensure that every Northeast student develops these important abilities.

One approach advocates the incorporation of essential skills into liberal arts seminars and the elimination of classes exclusively dedicated to a given essential skill. Speaking, writing, quantitative reasoning, and computer technology would be included throughout the core curriculum in varying degrees, without specific core classes focusing on each. While incorporation of essential skills throughout the core would allow more broad opportunities to diversely talented students, there is no reason to suppose that such incorporation is presently prevented. Classes dedicated to specific skill areas allow students to focus on and develop a greater level of proficiency in a given skill that can later be applied in more broad-based courses and throughout life. While breadth of exposure stands as a central tenet of the Liberal Arts canon, it should not preclude the focused development of essential skills.

The existing core grounds students well in many essential skill areas, but deficiencies exist in others. While strong emphases on writing and speaking exist in the current requirements, many students feel the addition of Basic Statistics and Survey of Computing courses as requirements for all degrees would strengthen quantitative reasoning and computer proficiency. Though a statistics course is available in the present core, students may easily opt out of it. The prevalence of statistical analysis in society and the benefits of its use in decision making and other areas warrant its inclusion as a requirement in the core. While many students obtain computer literacy through means other than classes dedicated to teaching it, a well-rounded three-hour survey course employing current yet standardized programs would ensure that all Northeast students graduate with reasonable proficiency in various fundamental computer applications. Expanding the essential skill components in the Liberal Arts and Sciences core by these means will lead to more quantitative-minded and able graduates.

**Math and Language Requirements**

The possibility of requiring Liberal Arts and Sciences calculus and intermediate proficiency in a foreign language has been raised as a means of addressing the perception that students graduating with Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Sciences degrees lack skills in mathematics and foreign languages, respectively. Steps should be taken to improve the proficiency of students in both of these vital areas, though with some degree of qualification in each.

Mathematical inquiry engages the mind in unique and challenging ways, and the inclusion of a demanding mathematics requirement unquestionably enhances the quality of education provided in the core. At the present, students can fulfill their core mathematics requirement with the combination of College Algebra and Plane Trigonometry, or with Elementary Functions alone. Inclusion of Basic Statistics or a higher-level substitute as an essential skill in the new core will further strengthen the mathematical abilities developed in the Core Curriculum. Provision of a three-hour Liberal Arts and Sciences Calculus course taught at a level below that of Analytical Geometry and Calculus I would be consistent with existing practices in other areas of the core, such as with Biology 100 or Political Science 171. While students should always be encouraged to pursue the most challenging math option they can successfully complete, present course offerings should be adjusted and expanded to allow more students to achieve their full potential.

The issue of a foreign language requirement is an altogether separate one. Its functional value aside, study of a second language provides students greater perspective and builds inquiry skills that may otherwise go undeveloped. Given that acquiring intermediate proficiency requires two full academic years of study, the burden placed on students by such a requirement is considerable. However, leaving the most minimal requirement optional, as is the case in the present core, allows many students to graduate without any exposure to a second language whatsoever. Compromise between the two extremes, though somewhat distasteful to advocates of both, would enhance the quality of education provided by the core without overly burdening students who otherwise have little motivation to enroll in foreign language courses. Such a compromise would most likely be achieved by requiring one full academic year of study in a second language, though other possibilities exist. Further development of culturally-based language classes, at a level below that of language majors, would greater meet the needs of students under any second language requirement.

**The Multicultural Perspective in the New Core**

Exposure to disciplines and perspectives outside of one's own concentration constitutes a central tenet of Liberal Education. Much as the Fine Arts major adds the perspectives of Mathematics and Social Sciences to his or her experience, students immersed in a predominantly Western society should add the perspective of other societies and cultures to their experience as well. Such exposure need not be confined to the classroom walls--studies and internships outside of the country constitute extremely effective means of studying another culture. Requiring the equivalent of two semesters study in the multicultural perspective, be it in the classroom or overseas, would ensure that all students receive significant exposure to cultures outside their own. Such a requirement would allow for the greater incorporation of Residential College course into the curriculum. Allowing the double-counting of such course work where it fulfills other requirements in the core or the major would eliminate any added scheduling burden for students.

**Composition in the New Core**

Composition classes serve two different functions within the core requirements--writing is treated as both an essential skill and a mode of inquiry. The present arrangement provides one course for each of these functions--English Composition I and English Composition II. While this separation of functions serves its purpose well, marginal adjustments may provide a stronger writing foundation for students.

Various core restructuring proposals call for a higher-level course integrating the breadth of the liberal arts experience and the depth of the major and minor. What is now seen as the second composition course should provide such an integrative experience while maintaining its writing emphasis. As the course would be common to every Northeast student, it should embody everything that has come to be known as "The Northeast Experience." This includes the incorporation of Junior Testing, the Institutional Student Survey, and the Sophomore Writing Experience into what would essentially be an integrative Liberal Arts and Sciences capstone course. Student writing would incorporate elements of the major, the minor, and the Liberal Arts

and Sciences curriculum, including the use of quantitative analysis and multimedia presentation. Along with assessment instruments and integrative writing projects, the inclusion of portfolio assessment would afford every student the opportunity to gain a new perspective on his or her academic careers. Such a course would pull together all of the values that the University stands for.

**Four Hour Class Credit**

The possibility of replacing the University's current five class-by-three hour semester system with a four class-by-four hour semester system, forwarded by some faculty, raises many questions. While such a shift would doubtlessly entail major implications for the academic core, class scheduling, class planning, facilities, and advising, the concept should not be casually dismissed as too radical on these bases alone. In order to maintain accountability to the standards it has set for itself, however, the University should engage in a serious discussion on the relative merits of a "four-by-four" credit system.

Alternate means of pursuing increased active learning and time-on-task in the curriculum should certainly be considered as well. In any scenario, the University should decide between the two systems and not settle on a hybrid in which there exists no universal standard--either a four-hour or a three-hour scheduling policy should be in force across all degree programs with the sole exception of laboratory sciences. Most importantly, decisions regarding the credit weight of classes should be based exclusively on what best facilitates student learning.

# *Academic Affairs*

An institution's academic policies, procedures, and support system capabilities provide the infrastructure necessary to facilitate the classroom experience. Well-managed, efficient, and equitable processes and policies allow students and faculty alike to concentrate on education while inadequate practices needlessly drain time and energy away from academics. Furthermore, support for the educational experience in such forms as undergraduate research, specific practices within the classroom, and quality advising can enhance other aspects of the University's academic program. Steps to streamline processes such as registration, to expand the benefits of programs such as undergraduate research, and to increase the presence of assessment in the academic program through such means as advisor evaluations and published course evaluations should be taken in order to ensure continuous improvement within the realm of academic affairs.

**Undergraduate Programs**

The undergraduate major and minor programs add depth of understanding and familiarity within specific areas of study to complement the breadth of knowledge provided by the Liberal Arts and Sciences Core. This concentrated knowledge not only engenders individual specialization, but in the Liberal Arts and Sciences context also allows for interdisciplinary comparison and a greater understanding of other academic fields accordingly.

As an uncommon institution with highly talented students, the University's major programs should challenge students to achieve at a level far above what is typically expected at the undergraduate level. Graduates should be nationally competitive in their chosen area of study and able to compete in the nation's top graduate programs. In order to better evaluate the institution's success in preparing its students for the future, assessment instruments should be developed to track the accomplishments of Northeast graduates.

Interdisciplinary course work enhances the University's Liberal Arts and Sciences program by educating students in a topic area through various high-level modes of inquiry. This can be accomplished both within a given course or across courses, as in interdisciplinary majors and minors. The development of additional cross-disciplinary courses, such as Studies in Decision

Making; majors, such as the Classics major; and minors, such as the Women's Studies minor; should be pursued by the University in order to better fulfill its Liberal Arts and Sciences mission. Specifically, students in focus groups and forums request expansion of interdisciplinary studies to include a Liberal Arts and Sciences major program and an African-American Studies major.

## Graduate Programs

Due to Northeast's uncommon and healthy emphasis on undergraduate students, the University's graduate degree programs play a more limited role and accordingly receive less attention in the University Community than those of other institutions. Nonetheless, the pursuit of quality graduate degree programs where consistent with the institution's best interests unquestionably provides numerous benefits to the University and its students.

Though the graduate student population and its role in the institution's decision-making are both relatively small, the University should strive to meet the needs of its graduate students. This includes the use of Graduate Teacher Research Assistantship money as a merit-based award for the most capable graduate students as opposed to as a recruiting tool. As undergraduates are able to retain their scholarships, graduate students should be able to keep their Assistantships, and the financial benefits associated with them, so long as their performance, in quantifiable terms, merits it.

## Academic Advising

Assessment data reflected relative dissatisfaction among students with academic advising in the early 1990s, and the university sought and gained a federal grant to investigate the problem. The Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education project (FIPSE) spawned manifold improvements in the advising program, including increased awareness of student rights and responsibilities, development of a new advising philosophy, and creation and dissemination of various information sources. Current Institutional Student Survey data rates satisfaction with advising processes and procedures higher than before FIPSE, reflecting the program's positive

effect. Students reported meeting with their advisor on a nearly monthly basis in recent ISS data, an encouraging indicator.

Nonetheless, there exists no mechanism of assessing the performance of individual advisors. ISS and GSQ data reflect nothing other than overall satisfaction with the program. The degree to which increased student satisfaction following the FIPSE project stemmed from changes in Academic Planning Services, the Business Advising Center, the faculty-at-large, or combinations thereof is unknown. Assessing individual advisors would clearly lead to improvements in the program. While faculty members receive feedback from the students they interact with in the classroom in the form of evaluations, they receive no formalized assessment of their performance as an advisor in the office. Developing a means of measuring individual effectiveness solely for the benefit of the advisor would provide helpful information for continuously improving individual advising performance.

Efforts to bring the advising system closer to underclassmen in the residential setting should be increased–this would coincide with an increased role for Faculty Associates in the Residential Colleges. All freshmen with declared majors should have a faculty advisor for purposes of guidance through the curriculum and a mentoring relationship, as is now not the case in the Residential Colleges. A full-time professional advisor should be available in the residential setting to all on-campus students, both declared and undeclared majors, in order to provide greater access to the advising system for first-time students. The specialization of professional advisors in specific divisions allows for each to more ably assist undeclared students, and this should remain the primary focus of Academic Planning Services advisors. Lastly, under no circumstances should the structure of the Colleges program or any other complication possible in the system prevent a student from changing advisors.

The FIPSE grant included a study of computerized degree audit systems with the intent of lessening the onerous paperwork burden on advisors and accelerating the current transfer of information. Acquisition of a computerized degree audit system should be pursued in conjunction with other changes to the Student Information System, as discussed in the Campus Technology section of this document. Advisors simply play too important a role in aiding students to spend a significant amount of their advising time keeping files and shuffling papers.

## Registration and Add/Drop

An assortment of limitations and inefficiencies are inherent in the current registration and add/drop systems--students must stand in exceedingly long lines, spend a considerable amount of time keeping track of course availability, and hunt down faculty members for yellow cards. Marginal improvements brought about by the efforts of the Registrar's Office, **Student**Senate, Undergraduate Council, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs Office, and others mitigated inefficiencies of the system, but system capacity and capabilities are still severely constrained. Though the institution committed itself long ago to replacing the existing system in favor of more modern means, limitations of the campus mainframe frustrated all such efforts. Upcoming retirement of the current mainframe should mark an end to stagnation with respect to the registration, add/drop, and other systems, a topic discussed at greater length in the Campus Technology chapter.

Specifically with respect to registration and add/drop, acquisition and installation of an on-line registration system would provide numerous advantages. The elimination of lines and a decreased need for students to track course closings would save substantial time for students. Routing the process through the advisor's office by remote/on-line means as opposed to through the McClain tunnel by existing means would add focus to the student-advisor relationship and decrease demands on both faculty and staff.

## Time on Task and the Curriculum

Recent Graduating Senior Questionnaire data reveals a decrease in the amount of time students spend weekly on academic pursuits out of class and a corresponding increase in the percentage of "A" grades granted. The North Central Association Self Study Report established that these trends have accompanied a leveling off in average undergraduate ACT scores, indicating that students are truly putting in less time to get better grades. In the interest of preserving the integrity of education offered by the university, this grade inflation cannot go unaddressed.

The drop in student time on task is much more severe than the increase in the percentage of "A"s granted. Accordingly, the University should explore means of increasing time spent by students on academics outside the classroom, though this by no means should be construed to include busy-work for its own sake. Techniques for increasing time on task should provide students a greater understanding of course material; quality of time within the context of the course involved should determine which techniques are used. An example of effective time-on-task promotion would entail requiring students to produce a written summary and evaluation of given reading materials. This type of assignment would require not only reading of the material but recitation and analysis as well. Use of one-minute papers at the beginning of class sessions would not only gauge student understanding of key concepts but would also create added incentive to be familiar with material before coming to class.

Issues surrounding grade inflation and time on task underscore the importance of keeping faculty pedagogical methods current with both the needs and abilities of today's Northeast student. Active learning goes far beyond students asking questions at points in an otherwise uni-directional lecture where they become confused; students who tune out after ten minutes of monotone won't be asking questions in the first place. As in all other areas of the University, the institution should strive for continuous improvement in the classroom teaching methods employed by faculty.

## Undergraduate Research

Working with a faculty mentor in a cooperative research effort provides students with tremendous learning opportunities. Undergraduate research not only provides a strong background in methodology for students, but also prepares them for the challenges they will face in graduate school and the professional environment. The University should continue to focus on this aspect of its academic program in order to provide its students with the best training possible for their future.

Publication of undergraduate research data subsided upon completion of the Five Year Plan. In the North Central Association Self Study Report, 1991 data is quoted regarding the level of undergraduate research, the highest number achieved under the most inflated counting method.

The University should resume publication of undergraduate research data in order to foster more careful monitoring by the University Community.

Elimination of Undergraduate Research Stipends in FY93 coincided with a general drop in the number of undergraduate students performing research with faculty members. When controlled for variation in methodology, undergraduate research climbed steadily throughout the Five Year Plan to a high of 578 in 1993 before plummeting to 411 in 1994–a level roughly on par with the middle years of the Five Year Plan. Re-institution of stipends by President Jack Magruder in the Fall of 1994 constituted the first step in reversing the trend. Current stipend funding is at roughly one-sixth that of the program when it was eliminated in the Fall of 1992. The University should continue to redirect funding to the stipend program as possible in order to better promote quality undergraduate research.

Beyond internal funding sources for undergraduate research, means of financing a stipend program through external sources should be pursued. This includes the active pursuit of government grants, special funds, and corporate partnerships. Alternate funding sources for undergraduate research should represent a major priority for Development Fund Corporation fund-raising efforts.

## Course Evaluations

Consistent with the institution's culture of assessment, students evaluate all instructors at the end of each semester on varying criteria. Diverse evaluation formats allow each instructor to gain feedback on specifics unique to his or her class. While this diversity should be preserved, a series of questions regarding basic student reactions to the course should be added to all evaluations, and responses later published, in order to provide registering students additional information regarding student reactions to specific course sections. Furthermore, faculty should be given the opportunity to present registering students with their teaching philosophy through such a publication. Such an open atmosphere will provide members of the faculty community with the perspectives of their colleagues and added incentive to remain at the forefront of excellence in teaching. Knowledge of both teaching styles and the reactions of previous students in advance of the registration process will present registering students a greater opportunity to select courses and

sections more suited to their learning style, and the level of course adding and dropping during the initial weeks of any given semester will decrease as a result.

### Grade Appeals

Adoption of a General Bulletin statement regarding future changes in grade appeals policy constituted the first step in creating a formal grade appeal procedure with the guarantee of due process. Both the academic divisions and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs Office should complete formalization of their appeals processes in order to complete the transition from an informal to a formal grade appeals process. Such action would validate the already-adopted Bulletin statement.

### Academic Integrity

A proactive academic integrity policy is fundamental to the spirit of an outstanding Liberal Arts and Sciences institution. To this end, the current University policy regarding "academic dishonesty" should be revised to more strongly affirm the responsibility and integrity of the individual student. This includes the incorporation of the revised policy into the Student Conduct Code. Previous attempts at modifying the existing academic dishonesty policy in recent years stalled for a number of reasons unrelated to the merits of changing the policy. Future efforts may be more effective if initiated by students and then filtered through appropriate entities, as such an approach proved effective with grade appeal policy.

### Graduation Ceremony and Diplomas

Recent changes in scheduling allow both a full finals week for all students and the continued presentation of diplomas at the graduation ceremony. Future scheduling decisions

should maintain both of these policies. The scheduling of Saturday finals, should it become a consideration in future scheduling decisions, should be avoided as weekend testing in general constitutes an undue stress on both students and faculty.

In the hopeful event of a University name change, the option to have the institution's current name on the diploma of students who attended the institution under both names should be provided. Alumni requests for a diploma featuring the new name should be honored as well.

# *Assessment*

Value-added assessment played a major role in bringing the University to the prominence it now enjoys, and it must continue to serve the institution in the future. Assessment data was deliberately sought out when possible to develop and substantiate many of the recommendations in this work. Due to a number of factors, however, the strength and effectiveness of the University's assessment program, particularly from the vantage of the student, has atrophied in recent years. This document attempts to make as strong a statement as possible regarding the importance of re-establishing the assessment and assessment usage cultures that once permeated the University. Accordingly, an entire chapter has been set aside to discuss this vital aspect of the institution.

### A Culture of Use

To compile data without appropriate application, either directly or indirectly, is to waste time and energy. While the University by-and-large makes good use of the data it gathers, substantial room for improvement exists. Implicit in a "Culture of Use" is widespread familiarity with pertinent data among faculty, administrators, and students. The University should pursue various avenues of broadening awareness, appreciation, and use of data throughout the institution–in both curricular and co-curricular dimensions. Many suggested means of accomplishing these objectives follow.

### Publication of Assessment Data

The absence of published institutional updates over recent years correlates with the decline in the University's emphasis on assessment. The Five Year Plan Annual Updates disseminated a wide array of assessment data to the University community, and documented improvements in the institution. Given that the Updates were employed for the specific purpose of documenting implementation of the mission change, they also served as an integral component of the assessment culture at the time.

The summary remark in the North Central Self Study Report that "Assessment is back" is both refreshing and encouraging. It can be argued, however, that the diminished emphasis on and presence of published Updates added significantly to the perception that it was gone to begin with. Formal publication and distribution of assessment data adds to the perception of institutional emphasis on the use of data. Without publication and distribution, however, widespread usage of the data becomes much more difficult if not impossible.

The University should establish a single annual publication applying assessment data to the University Master Plan. This would be consistent with the Master Plan's Goal 3 and its indicators in the Teaching-Learning Environment section of the Master Plan. Furthermore, such a publication would increase the sense of unity throughout the University community and enhance the effectiveness of the University Master Plan.

**Assessment of Co-Curricular Activity**

Recent efforts to expand the assessment culture beyond the walls of the classroom are well-founded. Establishment of the Junior Interview project and various questions on both the Institutional Student Survey and the Graduating Student Questionnaire represent initial progress in this direction. These efforts, however, limit their focus on the general effectiveness of co-curricular programs–assessment of these areas does little to assist in the decision-making process. Broad incorporation of student evaluation and feedback into areas such as institutional scholarship work, work-study, campus activities and organizations, student health services, athletics and the like will aid decision making throughout the University Community.

**Students and Assessment**

Current students, like all citizens in society, reap what previous generations sow and sow what future generations reap. Students receive degrees with integrity based on the experiences of the past, and should help build upon that legacy through a good faith effort in completing

assessment instruments. The importance of full participation by students in the various instruments can not be understated.

Student perceptions of the effectiveness and importance of the assessment program become a self-fulfilling prophecy. When students view assessment as a pointless burden and consequently put less effort into the various instruments, results become less meaningful over time and the program's effectiveness suffers. Positive student perceptions of assessment and the quality participation they lead to are therefore vital to the success of the program.

**Student Attitudes and Pre-Testing Data**

The 1995 North Central Association Self-Study Report analyzes at length both "modest yet consistent" declines in CAAP scores and "consistently diminishing gains realized from pre-test to post-test" over a period of relative uniformity in entering E-ACT scores. The report discusses decreased student support of the assessment program and the effect of higher levels of transfer credit as possible contributors to the trend. While the possible effects of transfer credit should be investigated, the low level of student support certainly must be addressed.

Consistent decreases in pre-test scores despite constant incoming E-ACT, to the extent that they are statistically significant, are attributed much more readily to subject hostility than to most any other explanation. The greater prevalence of transfer credits should help increase and not decrease pre-test scores as students will have attained more training in the high school environment. The seriousness of student apathy towards assessment, lamentable though it is, can not be dismissed or ignored any longer.

**Increasing Student Participation**

With a restructuring of the academic core curriculum on the horizon, the possibility of imbedding assessment instruments into the curriculum should be strongly considered. This would eliminate the commonly held student perception of assessment as an unnecessary drain on "free

time." Greater emphasis on the instruments by a larger number of faculty, who themselves would be more familiar with the data and its uses, would increase student appreciation for the program and lead to more quality participation.

One scenario for course-imbedding instruments would include the Institutional Student Survey (ISS), Junior Testing, and possibly the Sophomore Writing Experience (SWE) early in the second "writing class". Completing the instruments in a classroom setting would likely lead not only to more serious participation but also to more representative results. This is particularly true for the ISS. Presently, all ISS data comes from self-selected respondents–those who answer the mail survey. The response rate for the ISS has dropped substantially in recent years, threatening the instrument's credibility and reliability. Course-imbedding the ISS would dramatically increase both the size of its sample and the validity of its results.

Issues regarding pre-testing are possibly a separate matter. Since pre-testing is best administered during the Freshman Week Experience, freshmen should gain a strong sense of the importance of assessment before pre-testing. Steps must be taken, however, to ensure that a prominent emphasis on assessment produces positive results. Even the new student can become jaded if information is presented improperly. Showing the importance and pervasiveness of the assessment culture starting at the earliest experiences on campus would secure more serious participation and more meaningful results accordingly.

## Writing Assessment

No assessment device currently employed by the University receives more student criticism, founded and otherwise, than the Sophomore Writing Experience. Criticisms commonly voiced by students include: that few actually take it as sophomores; very little is to be gained from the test; it is not representative of a student's writing ability; and the instrument requires more time than it is worth. The idea of an assessment device designed specifically for students to gain a greater perspective on their writing is by no means a bad one. Student complaints regarding writing assessment seem to be directed more at the current implementation–not necessarily the idea.

**1993-94 Sophomore Writing Experience Annual Report**

**Number of Students Taking SWE**

| | |
|---|---|
| Sophomores | 278 |
| Juniors | 390 |
| Seniors (275 Seniors + 117 "Graduating" Seniors) | 392 |

The notion that the Sophomore Writing Experience is an assessment instrument taken by sophomores who plan to complete the second writing course their junior year could not be farther from reality, and should not be considered as justification to continue the instrument in its present form. The reality that roughly one of every four students taking the Sophomore Writing Experience is actually a sophomore calls into question its validity as a screening mechanism for the second writing class. Some seniors completing the Experience indicate they have already completed the second writing class, underscoring the need for an on-line registration system with pre-requisite screening. Furthermore, many non-sophomores completing the Experience before the second writing class do not take the advanced composition course until much later than they ideally would, indicating a weakness in the advising system.

A strong possibility for improving writing assessment would involve replacing the Sophomore Writing Experience in favor of a considerably increased emphasis on portfolio evaluation. This would include eliminating the writing assessment as a pre-requisite for the second writing class, as it is far from serving this function now. Students submitting actual papers from major and core courses, much more representative of a student's ability than a standard essay on which the student may or may not have put forth his or her best effort, would review and discuss their work with faculty. Unlike the SWE, writing evaluation would not be limited to works of any given year–students would be able to measure their progress over time by examining past and recent works. A portfolio system would also be very user-friendly; students would have to write nothing new but still receive the helpful feedback intended by writing assessment. One additional advantage held by portfolio assessment over the SWE lies in its much greater potential for evaluation of interdisciplinary composition. Regardless of whether it replaces the Sophomore

Writing Experience, portfolio assessment should certainly play a larger role than it enjoys at the present.

If the Sophomore Writing Experience were to be continued, administering this instrument through the curriculum would likely alleviate student dissatisfaction with the program. Incorporation of the instrument into either the early stages of the second composition course or the later stages of the first composition course would accomplish this. For cases in which students transfer in composition credit, the Sophomore Writing Experience could easily be administered out-of-class in the same fashion as it is presently administered to all students.

**Assessment of Graduates**

In many of the planning documents employed by the University over recent years, emphasis has been placed on both the incoming student and the graduating student. The preponderance of assessment instruments employed by the University focus on "value-added" learning by its programs between the first days on campus and the walk across the stage at graduation. "Value-added" to students while in the academic setting should be the primary emphasis of the assessment program as it leads to improvements in the academic program. By no means, however, should it be the only priority of assessment. The benefits of a Northeast education do not cease when a student receives his or her diploma. Likewise, assessment of Northeast's programs should not cease at that point either.

A nationally-ranked, highly selective institution should also emphasize the productivity of its graduates in the greater society. A Northeast education should be a long-term asset to the student who meets its rigorous challenges. To reflect this, Goal 5 of the University Master Plan's Outcomes section states "Northeast will graduate bachelors and masters degree students who are prepared for success in future pursuits including graduate/professional school studies and/or careers." In order to live up to the goals contained in the Master Plan, development of an effective post-graduate tracking system to assess and evaluate the further development of Northeast graduates is requisite.

Present assessment of graduates includes the Alumni/Employer Survey, the University Career Center Annual Report, and, arguably, nationally-normed senior test scores. These existing

instruments fall far short of providing the University with a complete or accurate sense of how well its students compete after graduation. The Alumni/Employer Survey data, to the extent it is still gathered, is by far the least circulated and least used of any of the instruments within the Assessment Plan. The University Career Center Annual Report, while the most thorough and inclusive of the instruments, fails to ask the most meaningful questions. Employment rates by themselves reveal little about how Northeast graduates are doing–they only confirm that they're not unemployed or in graduate school. Performance on nationally-normed senior tests indicate student ability, not student placement.

The University should develop a comprehensive instrument, perhaps quite similar to the University Career Center Annual Report, to assess alumni. The instrument should focus not only on quantitative data, such as employment and placement rates, but also on qualitative data. Are Northeast graduates finding employment in their field of study? What type of employment are they finding? Is the institution producing graduates who are under-employed? Is a Northeast education helping its alumni get a step ahead, or limiting them? To legitimately measure the outcomes of a Northeast education, all these questions and more must be asked. Further, results should be compiled, published, and circulated with those of other instruments.

# *Facilities*

Quality campus facilities expand the range of possibilities for curricular and co-curricular programs; the absence of them severely limits the educational process. Nowhere is this more true than at a Liberal Arts and Sciences institution providing a broad array of programs and options for its students. The University substantially improved its facilities in the early and mid 1990s, but an assortment of pressing needs remain. The developed ethic for continuously improving campus facilities must be preserved and expanded upon as the University looks to the future. Foresight and responsible commitment of resources should lead to a more positive campus environment, and student learning will benefit as a result.

**Pickler Memorial Library**

The presence of an excellent library facility is imperative for a thriving academic culture at any institution. The recent expansion and improvement of Pickler Memorial Library satisfied a great campus need by providing extensive new facilities for academic pursuits. The vast improvements in Pickler's facilities represent one of the major accomplishments of the University in its new mission. No longer contained by inadequate facilities, the University can now take many other actions to better meet the library needs of students.

Serving a highly selective institution with a rigorous academic program, Pickler Memorial receives extensive use. Students over the course of their academic careers spend many long days and nights in the library, often working for hours at a time in the facility. The needs of the student using Pickler for extended durations are not adequately addressed at the present. To this end, a restricted food and beverage area with vending machines should be established inside Pickler Memorial. Campus phones would be relocated to this area to minimize distractions to studying patrons.

Students rate computer lab availability and accessibility relatively low on the Institutional Student Survey, indicating a demand for more terminals and/or more lab hours. As the only student computer lab accessible after midnight, the number of non-multimedia terminals in the Pickler lab should be increased considerably to meet the high demand for them. Furthermore, morning, weekend, and holiday hours should be extended to better serve the needs of students and faculty.

Continued expansion of the general collection will help ensure the integrity of the library as an academic support facility. Additionally, while the inter-library loan service has improved considerably since Pickler's expansion, students should possess some means of requesting permanent additions to the general collection other than through a faculty member. Inter-library loan data should be analyzed for patterns exposing areas in the collection where expansion is needed.

Expansion of library resources is needed in other areas as well. Acquisition and updating of CD-ROM databases should continue, and means of expanding the use of on-line media services should be pursued. This should include the establishment of on-line connections to other schools. At present, attaining a hard copy of microfiche or microfilm requires use of a manually operated machine, completion of a form, a trip to the periodicals desk, and a wait anywhere from twenty minutes to five hours. Automatic microfiche and microfilm viewers with photocopying capabilities should be acquired to expedite the process and eliminate unnecessary steps.

The last decade witnessed library facilities jump from a large weakness of the University to becoming one of its greatest strengths. While this certainly benefits student learning in and of itself, the advantages of a better-equipped facility are maximized when the needs of the clients it is intended to serve are best met.

## Renovation of Academic Buildings

The original Five Year Plan, in response to the university's new liberal arts and sciences mission, cited the need for renovations to Baldwin, Violette, and Science Hall as well as to the southern portion of Ophelia Parrish. State money did not materialize for any of these projects until the Summer of 1994, when voters approved a $7.2 million bond-issue to renovate Violette Hall.

The need for renovation of these facilities for purposes of better implementing the university mission was established long ago and has been consistently re-asserted since. This reality, unfavorable as it is, makes more evident the need to make the most of what money does come for renovations. To this end, the university should make the most of its opportunity to substantially refurbish Violette Hall.

The courtyard enclosed by Violette constitutes one of the most poorly utilized areas of campus. Given the demand for additional study areas, conference rooms, classrooms, and faculty offices across divisions the prospect of enclosing and incorporating the courtyard into the building itself merits serious consideration. Along with renovation of the existing structure, better use of the courtyard space will help alleviate needs in many areas. While the renovation project should lead to a substantial increase in the building's capacity, great co-operation will be needed among students, faculty, staff, and administration to complete it.

Beyond the immediate Violette Hall project, South Ophelia Parrish should be renovated at the earliest possible opportunity for faculty office, classroom, and studio art space. Construction of a new storage facility at the Dulaney-Baldwin site should be included in any major Ophelia Parrish renovation package in order to compensate for the loss in storage space that reclamation of the building would represent.

The clear need for a fine arts center on campus adds another dimension to renovations of both Ophelia Parrish and Baldwin Hall. Interrelation of the two buildings and the need for a fine arts center is not new--the Five Year Plan outlined a possible course of action on the matter. The University should make a clear commitment to either building an entirely new facility to serve as a fine arts center or expanding and converting Ophelia Parrish so that it may meet the need. Renovations to Baldwin Hall should be driven by that decision.

**1994 Institutional Student Survey**

| | Quality | Availability |
|---|---|---|
| Art Studio Space | 2.65 | 2.54 |
| Performance Space | 2.68 | 2.34 |

Rate from 1 to 4; 1 is low, 4 is high; N=69/92

Dramatic expansion of the Science Division in recent years placed office, classroom, and lab space at a premium in Science Hall. Recent and current renovation efforts constitute progress, but facilities for the Division are a considerable distance from where they need to be to support the current enrollment. In the absence of a major renovation initiative, further efforts should be made use the existing facilities as efficiently as possible and to expand their capacity by means of small-scale renovation.

As capital improvements require vast resources to accomplish, maintaining the flexibility and versatility of interior space will ensure that buildings remain functional at the lowest cost possible. Instances of this are found in McClain Hall and the expanded Pickler Memorial Library. Particularly in the cases of the new student recreation center and Violette Hall renovations, built-in flexibility will lessen the need for substantial changes in the future.

## Student Recreation Center

The addition of a state-of-the-art student recreation center to the campus community in the next two years will address a major need. Students consistently rate athletic, exercise, and recreational facilities on campus among the least accessible and the lowest quality campus facilities in assessment instruments. A well designed facility dedicated to "free play" will afford students an opportunity to exercise routinely in a well-equipped facility and promote a healthy, well-rounded lifestyle consistent with the liberal arts tradition.

As the recreation center will both benefit students and be paid for by students, students should have a primary role in decision-making regarding the new center and its policies. The student voice is particularly important during the early implementation stages of the project, as decisions made in that period will largely define the building's future. Development of the building's student governing board, as mandated by the student referendum on the center, should proceed expediently in order to best serve this need.

**1994 Institutional Student Survey**

| | Quality | Availability |
|---|---|---|
| Recreational Facilities | 2.39 | 2.14 |
| Athletic/Exercise Facilities | 2.4 | 1.4 |

Rate from 1 to 4; 1 is low, 4 is high; N=218

As with all new capital projects, creating a flexible facility that can be expanded in the future is crucial. Careful consideration should be given to all nuances of the new facility as it will serve as the University's primary recreation center well into the next century. While the fitness fads of tomorrow are unknown, a strong emphasis on building flexibility will greatly assist the University in meeting future recreational needs.

The new center's presence will help meet needs in other facilities, as demands placed upon Pershing Arena and Kirk Gym will change. The absence of "free play" in Pershing Arena will leave more hours available for the Athletic Department, and lowered demand for the single-court Kirk Gym will broaden the options available for that facility's future.

**Athletics Facilities**

Participation in collegiate athletics enriches the educational experience of students both within and outside of the athletics program, while strengthening the University Community. Continued improvement of athletics facilities, including training facilities, will ensure the future contribution of a quality athletic department to the University. Fundraising for a new outdoor track and other athletics needs through Development Fund Corporation efforts should help to provide such continuous improvement.

**Kirk Building**

The December 1994 Master Plan Report draft targeted the "essentially abandoned" Kirk Building upper-level for future improvements. While a demand for its space will continue to exist until the student recreation center comes on line, other uses for the space should be considered after the center's opening. Substantial renovation will likely be necessary for any future conversion of the space, and no options should be ruled out at the present. Decisions made regarding the building's future use should include a broad assessment of all campus facility needs in order to maximize the utility of any renovations.

**Residence Hall Renovations**

Quality residential living environments promote student learning and socialization, lead to higher occupancy and retention rates, and aid in attracting prospective students to the University. The unsatisfactory condition of the University's residential facilities at the beginning of the decade displeased many students, a problem reflected by comparatively low retention and occupancy rates.

Efforts by the Board of Governors and the Residence Halls Improvements Committee to renovate dilapidated facilities had a tremendous positive impact, reflected by higher occupancy and retention. Residential living facilities have improved where renovation efforts have been focused, but a great number of needs remain unaddressed by the current plan. Future needs include room furniture in all buildings (other than the Missouri Colleges and Dobson Hall, where substantial furniture replacement has occurred), bathroom renovations in various buildings, and elevator work in Dobson and Nason Halls. The emphasis on room furniture replacement and other major renovation efforts must continue well past the current plan that ends in 2001, and current efforts should be expanded where possible.

**Campus Media Facilities**

Much as with the media in larger society, campus media can provide a common culture for a diverse student populace. Increased dissemination of information brought about by campus media assists all sectors of the University Community in their various pursuits. As experiences with radio, television, and newspaper media are included in the University's curriculum, quality interaction with quality media programs also directly benefits student learning. The University should increase its support of campus media facilities in order to better accrue all of these benefits.

The absence of a transmission tower for KNEU has been a student issue for some time–students rate KNEU substantially lower than all other campus communications in the Institutional Student Survey. Furthermore, other equipment and facility needs of KNEU are not being met. While the facility presently benefits those who directly interact with it, it clearly does not benefit the community in the way it was intended to or to the extent that it could with a transmission tower and improved facilities. **Student**Senate called for creation of a Campus Radio Station Task Force to address the needs of KNEU, and the administration prudently established one. These actions represent the initial stages of a process that should soon open KNEU up to a much broader student audience and help bring the university community closer together as a result.

**1994 Institutional Student Survey**

| | Satisfaction |
|---|---|
| KNEU Radio | 2.05 |

Rate from 1 to 4; 1 is low, 4 is high; N=211

Student initiative to broaden the scope of campus television broadcasting has added immeasurably to the University Community. Recent advancements seem even more impressive considering NEMO News's limited access to existing campus facilities and severely limited manpower. Provision of scholarship hours for students who are essentially volunteers at the

present, and greater access to current campus television production facilities for NEMO News, will facilitate improved and expanded television coverage to the community. The role of television programming at Northeast remains in its nascent stages; a much greater role lies ahead.

**Vehicles on Campus**

The noticeably increased presence of both university-owned and commercial vehicles on campus over the past two years raises student safety concerns. While in the short run various policy options are available to offices most directly connected with the matter, efforts to direct such activity to a location much less central to campus should be undertaken. This would most likely include relocation of the Physical Plant and Campus Mail facilities, presently housed in the Kirk Building and McKinney Center respectively, to the campus periphery. The Department of Public Safety should be relocated to a non-central location as well upon construction of the student recreation center.

**Accessibility**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) brought a new set of requirements to campus facilities and renovation projects. The University should continue execution of its plan to broaden the accessibility of its facilities to the disabled. This includes providing elevators for all academic buildings and as many residential halls as possible, automatic doors for all buildings, at least one accessible restroom per gender per building, accessible on-campus living accommodations in both suite and community style, and incorporation of all other ADA guidelines into future capital projects. To this end, the State should meet its obligation to fund campus accessibility.

# *Technology*

The pervasiveness of powerful computer technology in contemporary society necessitates that a competitive university emphasize and facilitate its use. To underscore the importance of this point and to draw attention to near-critical needs in the area of campus computing, a full chapter has been dedicated to the subject. Students and consultants alike have expressed concern with the existing state of campus computing, and encouragingly the University has begun to respond. Procurement of additional financial resources and establishment of various Task Forces and subcommittees constitutes progress in the area, with further progress likely to come in the near future. This chapter lays out many important aspects of the program that warrant consideration and emphasis.

## Microcomputers

The facet of campus computing interacting most directly with the student is the computer lab. While students rate quality of facilities somewhat positively in assessment instruments, they indicate dissatisfaction with accessibility. Assessment data shows that students rank satisfaction with the availability of computer terminals ahead of only one other area–availability of recreational facilities.

**1994 Institutional Student Survey**

| | Quality | Availability |
|---|---|---|
| Computer Labs | 2.88 | 2.32 |

Rank 1 to 4; 1 is low, 4 is high; N=264

To remedy this problem, the number of microcomputers available to students should be increased considerably. This is consistent with recent recommendations made by the North Central

Association. Further, the University should provide a 24-hour computing facility with all network software available. Terminals should be added to the Pickler Memorial Lab in particular as it is currently the only computing facility available for students beyond midnight. With an appropriately increasing emphasis on computing in the curriculum, demand for late-night computing–highest during the second half of the semester–will only increase. The University should accommodate this demand and increase the supply of microcomputers available to students.

Another issue raised by students regarding computer labs involves making optimal use of facilities that are available. Specifically, multimedia facilities such as those in the Pickler Memorial lab go almost completely unused by the student populace. Many students also report a lack of familiarity and ability with the Internet, a crucial gap in knowledge and skills for today's college student. The University should broaden awareness and use of these capacities through much greater incorporation in to the curriculum, a subject discussed at length in the Core Curriculum chapter.

The need for microcomputers is not contained to labs frequented by students–the University should strive to address the computing needs of faculty as well. Establishing and funding a regular replacement cycle for microcomputers and printers in faculty offices, by whatever means most appropriate, would ensure consistent improvement in faculty computing.

Two directives should guide the University's microcomputer purchasing practices. First, while the University should always strive to keep its hardware and software as current as possible–no facility on campus should include computers or software more than two generations behind the state-of-the- art. Recent tuition increases indicate a willingness for the institution to make considerable strides in this area. Second, as dedication to the first goal will necessitate routine replacement of out-dated hardware and software, the University should take greatest advantage of the market's diversity and gain as many of the best machines and software available at the lowest price available. This includes a concerted effort to gauge the many options available within the ever-changing computer market.

## Central Computing System

The quality and capabilities of an institution's central computer system drive the quality and capabilities of numerous other services and functions. A powerful, reliable, and flexible state-of-the-art system allows an institution to reap all the benefits of technological advances in the information age. Contrarily, the absence of a high-quality system stifles an institution's growth; there are certain tasks and functions for which the capacity simply does not exist.

The state of the university's computer mainframe clearly hinders the institution sufficiently to warrant its retirement. As stated by the EDUCOM consulting group in its 1993 report on Informational Technology Plans, "The academic mainframe is too small to provide adequate service during periods of heavy usage." The University should pursue replacing the current mainframe entirely in favor of a system or set of systems that significantly increases the capacity, capabilities, flexibility, and speed of the campus network. Every effort should be made to bring the best possible system to campus, including flexibility that will retain its utility well in to the future and adequate manpower for support. Investment in a high-quality, high-capacity central computer system will yield returns in nearly all areas of the University.

In all cases, the amount of full-time support staff dedicated to the operation and maintenance of the central computing system must increase. The institution presently employs fewer than necessary to ensure a proper level of support for the campus computing system, and the prospect of an advanced and more capable system decreasing the relative level of support required seems unlikely.

## Student Information System

Limitations of the current mainframe forestall efforts to improve the Student Information System. Upon replacement of the mainframe, proposed improvements to the Student Information System should go forward. Desirable features include remote access for faculty and students to registration and add/drop, computerized degree auditing capability, and incorporation of registration and student academic plans into course scheduling.

On-line registration and add/drop would eliminate excessive line waits and focus the registration process on the student/faculty advisor relationship. While many logistics of such a system would require considerable attention, it certainly could not be more complicated or time-consuming than the current process. The system would necessarily increase contact time between the student and his or her advisor, bringing a healthy added focus to the relationship and preventing its circumvention. Saved time and paperwork for students, faculty, and staff would make on-line registration software a wise investment for the University in the long run.

Computerized degree auditing software would provide several benefits to the university. First and foremost, the inefficiencies of having a single hard-copy of a student's advising folder would be eliminated with an on-line record. The advising process would be one of greater interaction and less paperwork; changing advisors would not require the exchange of manila folders among faculty who have numerous other duties to attend to. Second, student demand for courses two to six semesters in the future would be at least partially known. While few students devise a four-year plan that becomes reality, incorporation of course demand information will allow the wishes of more students to be granted. Third, students considering a change of majors or those declaring for the first time will be assisted by easy access to requirements for all majors. The question "How long will I be here if I declare Chemistry now?" will be more easily answered with the aid of degree audit software.

The above mentioned capacities absent in the existing Student Information System would also assist University planning. Demand for specific courses would be partially known in advance; current unmet demands for a given semester could be better tracked by software as well. This information could be incorporated into decisions regarding hiring, availability of sections, and course requirements.

The existing registration, add/drop, and advising system performs well considering its onerous limitations. With a new central computer system on the horizon, it is simply time for the University to streamline and improve these processes for the benefit of students, faculty, and staff alike.

**Networking**

An expansive and widely accessible campus computer network brings the many benefits of technology closer to the student it is intended to serve. The University should take steps necessary to broaden access to its network, including wiring all residence hall computer labs. Ideally, students living on campus would have access to the University network from their room without the use of a modem. Considering the current infrastructural requirements of such wide access in terms of network capacity and wiring of rooms, residence hall room access may seem at best a distant objective. Nonetheless, the University should incorporate the goal of in-room access into all related decisions in order to bring it about in time.

As the University enters a period of widespread change in its technological infrastructure, it should take advantage of the numerous options presented by state-of-the-art technology. The use of Local Area Networks for offices with specialized software may relieve needless burden on the larger campus network. Different network layouts may also be considered; there exist many competitive options to the current token ring adapter system, such as that employed by the Ethernet. Access goes beyond networking within the campus environment; better access to the Internet, including graphics interfacing capabilities, will revolutionize computing on campus. Enhanced networking and interfacing with institutions across the state and throughout the country will allow the University to become much more competitive nationally.

# *Student Services*

Implications of the mission change were immediately clear for many areas of the University's program, especially admissions and the curriculum. Along with increased academic and admission standards, the mission change necessitated a paradigm shift within student services from that of a regional university to that of a statewide institution. While many ramifications of that shift have played out, lingering echoes of the mission change are heard more loudly in the area of student services today than in any other aspect of the University. While tremendous progress has been made in improving, expanding, and re-focusing the student services provided, efforts to better accommodate the new and different student body throughout the system must continue.

## Student Health Services

Shifting from a regional institution to a state-wide university with nation-wide acclaim led to a substantial increase in the student body's geographic diversity. As a result, the importance of providing quality on-campus student health services for students with few other local options warrants a shift in the Student Health Clinic's current focus.

While generating informative programming for the campus community and providing discount services to University faculty and staff indisputably benefits the University Community, the Student Health Clinic should focus almost exclusively on providing high-quality and easily accessible health care to students. Informative programming is of little help to a student who must wait the better part of a week to attain a five-minute appointment. While many efforts to increase accessibility have been made, ISS data reflects student dissatisfaction with present accessibility to the Clinic and the quality of services provided. Only after the Clinic can provide same-day access to all students should it commit additional time, energy, or student resources to other services–students pay their health clinic fee for health care, not programming. Any increases in staff or expansion of facilities necessary to provide access to a physician within 24 hours should be undertaken; this would require further increases in the Clinic's efficiency and most likely increases in funding.

## Career and Graduate School Services

The University attracts nationally competitive incoming students, and focuses its processes on producing nationally competitive graduates. A Northeast degree should accordingly lead graduates to jobs and graduate programs of national caliber. University career and graduate school services should assist students in capitalizing upon their superior education, facilitating the development of experience, contacts, and skills necessary to do so.

Assessing the effectiveness of both the University Career Center and the University as a whole in providing students with excellent opportunities after graduation will provide a basis for future decision making. This goes far beyond simply determining whether graduates have been "placed". A nationally competitive institution should evaluate the quality of opportunities available for graduates carrying its name on their resumes. Only in this way can the institution truly determine the quality of its contribution to the greater society. Means of accomplishing this goal are discussed in the Assessment chapter.

Students express several concerns regarding present career and graduate school services, many of which still linger from the University's previously regional emphasis. The dramatically increased percentage of students going on to graduate school as a result of the mission change has not witnessed a proportionally increased emphasis on services facilitating better graduate school placement. Many students feel the scope of current efforts to bring employers to campus is too narrow and regionally-based; that higher-caliber employers from throughout the Midwest and across the country should be more accessible to Northeast's high-ability students. Improved incorporation of University alumni into the placement process will open more doors for Northeast graduates.

## University Counseling Services

The addition of the University Counseling Center to campus met a very important need. Use of the center has climbed consistently since its inception, signifying an increasing awareness of its availability. Progressive programming and outreach efforts should continue as added

perspectives and feedback can make a difference in the college experience, and possibly the life, of any student.

## Student Government

Meaningful inclusion of the student perspective in University decisions is a hallmark of Northeast Missouri State University. Ample opportunities exist for students to make a difference in the development of the institution--a blessing not enjoyed by students at many other schools. Such an open and participatory culture, one in which top administrators and faculty are easily accessible to all students, constitutes a major force behind the University's success. Preserving the culture and spirit of cooperation without co-optation between students and the faculty, administration and staff will lead to outstanding future accomplishments for the University as a whole.

Student participation in institutional decision making should accordingly be a matter of formal policy at Northeast. Within the context of student government, **Student**Senate has long served *de facto* as the official representation of student interests. The time has come for the University to grant *de jure* recognition to **Student**Senate by including its stated role, as the official representation of the Student Association acting to further the present and future best interests of the Student Association, in the University's Code of Policies.

## Student Judicial System

Implementation of the Student Judicial System has given students the option of trial by randomly selected peers, rather than administratively appointed students, for the first time at Northeast. This concomitantly broadens the role of students in self-governance and demonstrates the University's respect for its students. The system should be an effective option for those charged with violating the Student Conduct Code, and should be fully supported by the University.

In order to serve as an effective option, substantial efforts must be undertaken to inform students of their rights and responsibilities regarding the Student Judicial System. Incoming

students in particular should be made aware of the options available to them. Students charged with breaching the Conduct Code should be fully informed of their options, and all attempts should be made to settle violations at a lower level–only in rare cases should matters require settlement at the Judicial System level.

The Student Judicial System should stand as a symbol of uncommonly strong student responsibility and citizenship within an uncommonly strong University Community. Consequently, its mere presence as an option, regardless of its usage rate, fulfills the purpose for which it was created.

## The Organizational Activity Fund

Adoption of the Campus Activity Fee (CAF) by the Student Association in 1993 fundamentally changed the face of student entertainment at Northeast. Funds available to the Student Activities Board increased roughly 400%, allowing vast improvements in the quality and quantity of entertainment events available to students. Establishment of the Funds Allotment Council (FAC) earmarked a considerable portion of the Fee for educational and programming use by student organizations, and created a system of checks-and-balances to ensure the money was well spent. One oft-voiced concern regarding current implementation of the OAF involves the seeming lack of applicants for FAC funding. While the FAC's role on campus will continue to evolve in future years, efforts to increase its outreach and campus visibility will lead to higher participation by campus organizations each year.

The initial referendum called for a specific OAF review process, and the timeline established by voters should be adhered to. When the time to review the OAF arrives, as many options for its future should be considered as possible. As the OAF is student money, substantial efforts should be made to include a diverse array of students representing a myriad of interests in the review process.

**Student Identification**

Implementation of a new student identification card system eliminated redundancy and created much greater uniformity throughout many areas of student life. Presently, all students receive a single card including library services, meal tickets, laundry services, and general identification functions. The present system, a tremendous step forward from that before it, should be expanded to include a declining balance that can be used for the bookstore, library fines, photocopiers, on-campus meal expenses, and any other appropriate functions. Implementation would be relatively simple and would streamline many of the University's money-handling functions.

**Student Union Building**

Recent renovations made to the Student Union Building transformed the facility into a hub of student activity. A constantly high level of vibrant student activity pervades the Union from it opening in the morning until late in the evening; the difference vis-a-vis three years ago is tremendous. As further testament to the improvements, students express widespread satisfaction with the new Union facilities in the Institutional Student Survey--quality of facilities is rated at 3.31 on a 1 to 4 scale.

The upswing in activity, however, has created an ever-increasing demand for space in the Union. Activities not fundamental to the building's purpose, such as standardized testing and assessment, should be routed elsewhere as possible to free space for student activities. A student advisory board with domain over all building policies should carefully monitor room reservation patterns, ensuring that student access to Union facilities is maximized.

Extension of evening hours for the Student Union basement to mirror those of the library would better serve the students. Three-quarters of the one thousand students responding to the Fall 1994 **Student**Senate Campus Environment Survey indicated they would make use of extended Student Union basement hours. Providing centralized, on-campus space for programming, work, and relaxation after midnight would satisfy a current need among students.

## Campus Activities and Organizations

The correlation between student involvement in extracurricular activities and student retention is well established. Involvement in student organizations constitutes a major portion of the extracurricular experience, and presents the student with a host of opportunities to develop his or her skills in working with groups of all sizes. Northeast's unique environment fosters a high level of student activity, but more importantly supports organizational experiences by providing resources and space necessary for them. Most recently, creation of the Funds Allotment Council, expansion of the Campus Organizations and Activities Center (CAOC), and renovation of the Student Union Building significantly broadened opportunities for the diverse array of student organizations at Northeast.

Greater efforts should be made to bring this vital aspect of the campus community closer together. While many organizations make use of the CAOC, the center should become a focus-point for cooperative programming, leadership training, and most importantly meaningful communication between student groups. Northeast's student groups prove routinely that they can accomplish a great deal acting alone; bringing them together will lead to even greater educational experiences and achievements. While a multitude of student-led initiatives in this direction are well under way, a stronger and broader role for the CAOC will do much to add to the sense of campus community within the realm of student organizations.

## Campus Vendors

Private businesses play a key supporting role in providing on-campus goods and services to students. At Northeast, on-campus vendors provide both the Campus Bookstore and food service for the University. The inherently contractual nature of these service arrangements creates a somewhat different dynamic for student input–policy direction stems less directly from the University and more directly from the vendor. This necessitates a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation between student clients and on-campus businesses.

The February 1995 North Central Visit Team Exit Interview echoed concerns of many students regarding the Campus Bookstore. While the bookstore should continue striving to provide textbooks at the lowest possible cost to students, selection of other books (such as best-sellers, novels, and trade paperbacks) and convenience items should be expanded considerably. Improvements in this direction should be made to the extent possible under the recently-renewed Barnes & Noble contract.

Food service stands as another area in which the University has improved considerably in recent years. Initiatives undertaken by Morrison's and the University considerably improved both the quality and selection of food available as well as aesthetic features of the dining environments themselves. Current dining area renovation and re-furnishing plans should be completed with an eye towards future needs. Furthermore, the prospect of bringing a commercial fast-food enterprise to campus, to the extent allowed by present contracts, should be investigated. This would broaden the options available to on-campus students and decrease congestion at peak hours, while expanding the total number of hours available for students to eat. Lastly, abolition of restrictions on meal plan transfer will allow students a greater range of dining options at all hours of the day.

# *Student Housing*

Students look for particular qualities and attributes in their living environments--some prefer the convenience and closeness of on-campus accommodations, while others value the independence of off-campus arrangements. Living space that effectively facilitates a student's lifestyle is the one standard common to all; this includes issues such as the quality of facilities, affordability of accommodations, and desirability of location. The University Community should work toward the end of providing quality housing for all students, on and off-campus.

A positive on-campus living environment promotes interaction among diverse students, fosters a sense of community, and contributes greatly to student retention. Various initiatives resulted in substantial improvements in on-campus living conditions over recent years, including the establishment and expansion of co-educational living environments, the adoption of a twenty-four hour visitation policy, and numerous renovations. The University should continue pursuing means of enhancing the living standard of on-campus students as it has in the recent past.

Similarly, many students find the autonomy of off-campus living arrangements more suitable to their needs. As issues surrounding off-campus housing fall by-and-large outside the domain of University policy, student involvement in the process must be re-emphasized, as nearly half of all students live off-campus.

### The Residential Colleges System

The Residential Colleges program began as an effort to create an alternate on-campus living system that more closely exemplified the University's Liberal Arts and Sciences mission. While both the Residential Colleges system and the traditional "residential halls" have developed their own distinct attributes over time, maintaining both systems no longer seems sensible. The academic emphases of the Residential Colleges should be expanded to all on-campus living environments in order to better provide for the needs of all on-campus students. This should include any appropriate administrative restructuring, including the extension of the Peer Advisor position to all residential settings and a considerable increase in the number of live-in faculty.

Even within the existing colleges, the emphasis on faculty contact and student academic development should be strengthened. The Liberal Arts and Sciences culture, and the academic

emphasis it entails, should permeate the on-campus living experience through a range of practices. This includes incorporation of Faculty Associates into educational programming whenever possible and an overall broadening of the role played by faculty in the living environment.

Professional advising in the residential setting provides students a close source of information, support, and advice on assorted academic and even co-curricular matters. Close attention paid in particular to students who experience difficulty in finding a major provides such students with a strong added perspective and can ease the burden of such uncertainty considerably. Professional advising should accordingly play a strong role in the residential setting, and the role of offices such as Academic Planning Services and the Business Advising Center in the residential setting should be expanded as necessary to meet the needs of on-campus students.

## Programming

Both small and large-scale programming efforts broaden the opportunities provided to on-campus students. Exposure to diverse viewpoints, functional and vocational information such as resume-writing and time-management strategies, social activities, and general information considerably enhances the educational experience. The planning of programs and events also builds organizational skills in the student or students involved in such planning. In order to provide a broad spectrum of programming opportunities, a balance between large-scale programs, such as those provided through the "Monday Night in Ryle" series and other hall-wide events, and those more limited in scope, such as house activities, should be maintained.

Efforts to make in-hall programming more campus-wide should increase. This includes not only cooperation among living environments but also greater incorporation of campus-wide activities groups such as the Student Activities Board and the Funds Allotment Council. Interaction in the planning of large-scale events both strengthens the sense of University Community and eliminates duplication of efforts and fees.

**Expansion of On-Campus Housing**

Many current residential living policy concerns find their roots in the increased desirability of on-campus living. Higher levels of occupancy create a need for more space; the system has accomplished this in as many places as possible, with considerable tradeoffs. For instance, system capacity increased by over one hundred spaces when residential living staff members were given roommates–while the increased demand for spaces was partially alleviated, the trade-off in staff privacy and morale made it a less-than-optimal policy. Increased occupancy in less desirable three and four-person rooms constituted another trade-off for higher occupancy in general. All indicators point to a need for additional on-campus spaces given a stable enrollment.

Before delving into the issue of constructing new spaces, however, the state of affairs just three or four years ago should be remembered–occupancy had dropped to the point that converting a major residence hall into office space became a serious consideration. Had the University not pursued aggressive renovation efforts and progressive living environment policies, it is likely that a greater proportion of the student body would be living off-campus today. While renovations and policy changes created a solid new foundation for occupancy, neglecting needed renovations will likely compromise that foundation–students only rate the present quality of residence hall facilities at 2.58 on a 1 to 4 scale in the ISS. While construction of additional spaces may well be warranted, the University must continue its aggressive efforts to upgrade existing spaces.

Two key need areas should be considered for on-campus housing expansion: on-campus apartment spaces and Greek housing. The tremendous demand for quality apartment spaces and the considerable shortage of such spaces both on-campus and off-campus should be addressed to the extent possible by the University. As students rate the quality of existing on-campus apartment spaces at 2.4 on a 1 to 4 scale in the ISS, renovation efforts to existing campus apartment spaces should continue. As testament to the demand for quality apartment spaces, enough individuals apply for space in Randolph Apartments on the first day of housing renewal to fill the facility twice over.

On the other hand, there are the significant needs of the Greek system. Sororities are presently housed in Brewer Hall, and encounter consistent difficulty in filling spaces due to the building's poor suitability for Greek housing. Many proponents of a Greek Row for fraternities and

sororities alike wish to examine cooperative funding with the University as a means of constructing or acquiring new housing. Others still would prefer on-campus cluster apartments or townhouses. As the Greek system enriches the educational and developmental experiences of nearly one-third of the student body, the University should support it to the extent feasible and consider its interests in campus housing expansion decisions.

Balancing the various interests of the student body in making any housing expansion decisions–in the direction of new apartment spaces, Greek housing, neither, or both–is paramount; the process should be both open and participatory. In any scenario, expansion of residential facilities should lead to an increase in the percentage of total students living on-campus; not to an increase in total students.

### Single-Sex Living Accommodations

The significant expansion of coeducational living environments represented a major leap forward for on-campus living. A major concern expressed during discussions regarding co-educational housing expansion pertained to the continued need for truly single-sex accommodations. While over five-hundred spaces are available to women choosing a single-sex building, none are available for men. This seems particularly unreasonable as E.C. Grim Hall could easily meet the substantially lower demand for all-male housing, but instead presently provides sixty coeducational spaces. Converting E.C. Grim Hall spaces to single-sex male and all Dobson Hall spaces to coeducational would preserve the current balance of spaces and create a single-sex building for men.

### Off-Campus Housing

Issues regarding off-campus housing provide a seemingly constant source of frustration for students working to effect meaningful improvement in overall conditions. Safety predominates as an issue in many aspects of off-campus housing, including street lighting and the structural integrity

of the housing itself. Sidewalks and streets in predominantly student neighborhoods seem to be in a constant state of disrepair, yet the student populace provides a significant boost to the area economy.

Students must view the streets, sidewalks, and houses of Kirksville as their community; not simply as a place in which they reside for one or more years. This includes much more active involvement in city government--the most obvious lesson learned from years of decay in public works is that students must take responsibility for their community and support candidates who represent their interests in local elections. While this would constitute only the smallest of steps in moving towards genuine improvements, little effort has been taken historically by student government to recruit and support student candidates for City Council. Accordingly, **Student**Senate should address the general conditions of off-campus living by supporting increased civic involvement of students in general and in local government.

Aside from the general condition of off-campus housing, resources on housing availability and placement are lacking for students in general and for transfer students in particular. The efforts of **Student**Senate to provide off-campus housing information through the Landlord List, though an asset to the student body, are severely limited by manpower available, the sheer number and diversity of other issues the Senate is involved in, and the other time commitments of Student Senators. The dedication of one full- or half-time staff position within Student Affairs to off-campus housing could dramatically expand the service both in qualitative and quantitative terms. This would be consistent with practices at many other state institutions and a tremendous improvement in services available to students in the area of off-campus housing.

# *The University Community*

While strong resources, policies, programs, and facilities all enhance the institution's effectiveness, the people within the University Community stand as its greatest strength. At the very core of its being, the University is most defined by the people it serves and that serve it–this includes present and future students, faculty, staff, administration, alumni, members of the Kirksville community, and many others.

Not only the talents and diversity of these various individuals but also the nature and character of their relationships defines the greater University Community as a whole. The University should employ practices and policies strengthening both the interrelationships of Community members and the groups encompassed in the Community itself.

## The Student Body

Students stand at the center of the University's purpose and activities. Students choose Northeast to provide their continued education, and the institution strives to add to their knowledge, abilities, and citizenship. To maximize its contribution to society and to its students, the University should attract students best suited to its mission and standards.

Adoption of the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education's "Highly Selective" admissions criterion in 1993 formalized an already enterprising admissions policy. In accordance with the mission change, the University continuously attracts high-ability and geographically diverse students. Continuation of current admissions policies and standards ensures that incoming students will be capable of not only meeting the rigorous demands of an excellent Liberal Arts and Sciences Education, but also of thriving in such an environment.

Exposure to perspectives and cultures other than one's own composes a crucial part of an effective Liberal Arts and Sciences Education, and teaches students to function effectively in an ever-smaller but astoundingly multifarious world. Pursuit of greater diversity within the student body allows for this exposure by enabling students to learn from each other in a highly effective manner–the experience of living and working together in the campus environment. Greater incorporation of historically under-represented groups into the student body will considerably enhance educational

opportunities for all students. Already strong efforts to bring greater diversity to the student body should accordingly be expanded and increased within the domain of a "Highly Selective" admissions standard.

The University's current level of enrollment has remained stable for roughly a decade, facilitating planning efforts and allowing for greater concentration on individual student needs. Many improvements in the University's academic program would not have been possible in an environment of increasing student enrollment; indeed, existing facilities and infrastructure still do not completely meet the needs of the current enrollment. The size of the student body should be maintained for the foreseeable future, and efforts should be focused on providing approximately 6,100 students the most for their money.

## Student Attitudes

As citizens of the University Community, students play a determinant role in its success. Student alienation creates a toxic climate of cynicism and distrust within the University Community that leads to problems in many areas, while student enthusiasm and support for the institution and its goals propel the University forward. As in any community, whether constituents feel alienated or a part of something special largely results from the quality of the relationship between constituency and leadership. This magnifies the obligation of decision-making entities such as **Student**Senate, Undergraduate Council, the Faculty Senate, the Administration, and the Board of Governors to provide a high level of quality information exchange between the students and the rest of the Community.

The obligation certainly does not rest exclusively on the shoulders of decision-making entities, however. The responsibility of ensuring a healthy relationship between students and the University Community falls on the students themselves as well. As students enjoy the fruits of the University's uncommon dedication to a lean administration, a disproportionately high instructional budget, a low student-to-faculty ratio, relentless self-assessment, and most importantly continued pursuit of academic excellence, they too must play a role in the welfare of the Community. This includes an understanding of the institution's mission and goals, participation in activities vital to the

University's decision-making process, and communication with decision-making entities by formal or informal means.

**Students and the University**

Changes in an assortment of University policies generated a much higher level of trust between students and the institution than existed previously. While students support many goals of the University and themselves gain from the institution's success, their support cannot simply be assumed–students must be informed of factors in the institution's decision-making process, particularly regarding issues affecting all students. Consequently, campus media sources should strive to portray issues as objectively as possible and campus leadership must aggressively "get the message out" on potentially controversial decisions. Only by these means can schisms surrounding issues such as the name change be prevented.

Aside from addressing feelings of student alienation from the Community, the continued affordability of a Northeast education should be preserved to the extent possible. Despite considerable progress in recent years, the infrastructural needs of the campus are still significant. This includes auxiliary facilities, academic buildings, technological capabilities, and personnel needs. The University's dedication to providing the most possible improvements for the lowest feasible increases in tuition and room and board must be maintained if the institution is to maintain its affordability. While a given level of tuition and room and board increases is inevitable due to both inflation and necessity, fiscal conservatism in the budgeting process, sound financial management, acquisition of alternate funding sources, and cost-cutting where not excessive should all be pursued in order to keep the cost of education at Northeast affordable for the students it is meant to benefit.

In order to foster a greater sense of community felt by students, greater incentive should be provided for students to remain in Kirksville through the weekend. Possible means of accomplishing this include a wide array of campus events, activities, organizations, recreational opportunities, and other program offerings. Though no unitary course of action can single-handedly

transform the campus into an ideal weekend venue for all students, incremental steps in several areas of the University Community will bring about gradual improvement.

## The Faculty

In order to provide the best possible educational opportunity to students, the University should continue to attract top-notch faculty from their respective fields. The current student-to-faculty ratio, though impressive, should be lowered further still by adding new faculty positions, particularly in divisions and departments where double and triple sections are needed simply to meet student demand for given courses. In order to maintain the University's emphases on a lean administration and a disproportionately large faculty, an increase in the faculty-to-staff ratio should occur as well.

The importance of these goals is seen in the incremental decision-making of the University; unfortunately, the benefits of faculty expansion can only be meaningfully achieved as constraints on financial resources, classroom space, and faculty office space diminish. Along with the continued need for more faculty, considerable needs exist in classroom, office, and laboratory facilities for the current number of faculty. Efforts should be made to ensure a proper level of infrastructural support exists or can easily be attained for each added position. In order to continue attracting quality faculty to the institution, this includes the ability to pay faculty at least the regionally-adjusted national average compensation level.

## Faculty Attitudes

Faculty serve a function fundamental to the institution's mission and goals–without quality instruction, quality education can not be produced and accordingly the University can not fulfill its mission. The high quality faculty at Northeast has not only produced truly outstanding outcomes within the classroom environment, it has also played an integral role in the University's transition from a regional school to the statewide Liberal Arts and Sciences institution. While participation of faculty members in the institution's decision-making serves an instrumental purpose in centering the

school's priorities around academic imperatives, faculty, much as students, must prioritize "academics first" in their scheduling.

As faculty members stand as a strong link between students and the University, the values and ideals of the institution should be articulated as clearly as possible through the classroom experience. Faculty should serve as ambassadors of Liberal Education, encouraging students to test their limits and to grow in new directions.

In order for faculty to effectively elucidate the University's values, all instructors, especially those new to the University Community, should themselves receive a thorough grounding in both the institution's ideals and the means by which it strives to meet its goals. This includes a thorough familiarity with the uses of assessment data and consistent use of it to improve upon the classroom environment. Beyond this, all faculty should be familiar with basic University policies and processes such as yellow-carding, add/drop, and registration. Incentives for innovation in instruction, such as the Jepson Fellows program, should be employed to encourage faculty to continuously improve their pedagogical method. Only by ensuring that faculty move forward in their methods, including the expanded use of computer technology in the classroom, can the educational product of the institution move upward in its quality.

## The Administration

The University's administration played a major role in creating the currently strong and vibrant University Community. Inclusion of students, faculty, and staff in the institution's decision-making processes generates a healthy culture of participation throughout the Community, encouraging more of its members to contribute as they know their views will be heard and taken in to account. As it is the students who the institution is primarily intended to serve, the administration should incorporate the present and future best interests of the student body into each of its decisions, keeping in mind that the education of students is providing them gainful employment.

The historically lean and fiscally conservative nature of the University's administration allowed greater steps forward in other areas of its program, most importantly in academics. The strongest effort possible should be made to maintain such a highly efficient culture without

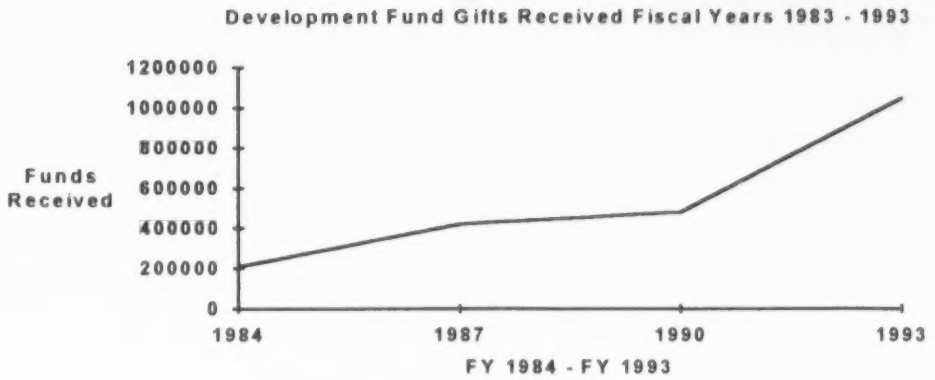
sacrificing effectiveness or capability–under-staffed offices can be just as detrimental to the University's performance as over-staffed departments. Similarly, the virtues of fiscal conservatism provide the greatest benefits when sound financial leverage is used aggressively. The institution has an excellent record of maintaining a balance of conservatism and aggressiveness, and should continue to use its financial resources to bring itself the greatest benefit.

A strong vision of the future of the University generates enthusiasm among constituent groups and sparks greater efforts of self-assessment. Such a growing and changing vision propelled the institution from where it sat when Charles McClain first set foot on campus to where it stands today. The administration must display strong leadership both in establishing a clear vision for the future of the University and in operationalizing the goals contained within it. This document is intended to be a first effort in the direction of re-asserting the University's vision of itself; others must follow in order to continue the legacy of continued pursuit of excellence at Northeast. The University must stay in "Drive," not simply on "Cruise Control."

The continuous addition of fresh, outside perspectives helps temper the University's administrative culture and build a broader vision. To this end, the practice of internal reassignments to fill vacant positions should be curtailed in favor of incorporating new points of view. In the long run, a more balanced and healthy perspective will be attained as a result.

## Alumni and Development

The state's substantially decreased support for higher education in recent years generates enormous financial pressure on institutions to offset lost funding–that the University has maintained its relative affordability for students in such a climate is very telling of its ability to manage resources efficiently. Still, the resulting need to seek out new sources of revenue spawned aggressive fund-raising efforts by the Alumni and Development Office, including creation of the Development Fund Corporation and Tel-Alumni. Efforts to encourage increased alumni, private sector, and non-profit support of the University should be expanded considerably, as every dollar received through such efforts can be put to use bettering the University Community. The University's relatively nascent Development program must come of age very quickly in order to help preserve both the school's future financial integrity and its affordability.



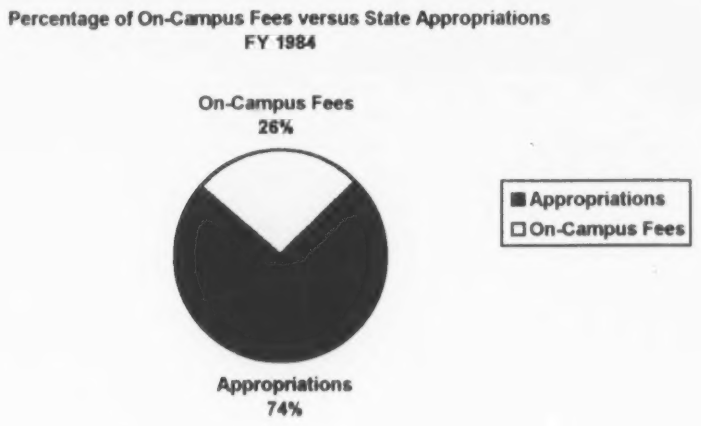

### University-Wide Programming

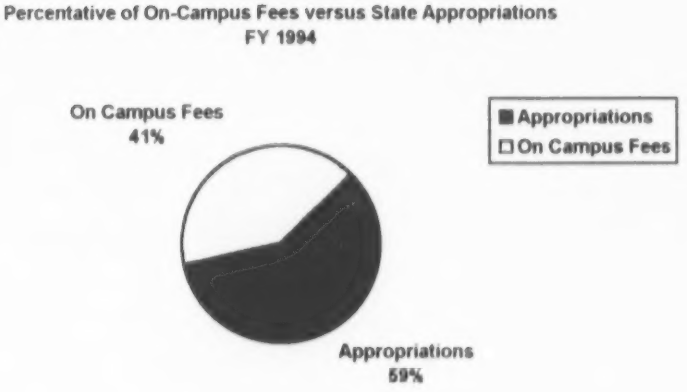
Programs such as the Lyceum Series, the Monday Night in Ryle Series, Student Activities Board events, Northeast Athletics events, and special events such as the Baldwin Lecture and Dr. Martin Luther King Day festivities pull diverse segments of the University Community together and provide an exciting, entertaining, and in many cases educational break from the daily routine at Northeast. Such programs add highlights to what is known as "The Northeast Experience" and truly build a sense of community. The University should continue to support these programs as they constitute a vital component of the University Community.

### The University and the State

The 1985 mission change fundamentally altered the role of the state university located in Kirksville. No longer a regional institution, this Liberal Arts and Sciences institution now services the entire state. Though the University implemented its new mission in as thorough and expedient a manner as possible given extremely limited additional resources, the state continually failed to fund not only the process of institutional change itself but also the increased operational costs incurred

by a statewide institution vis-a-vis those of a regional school. For the University's part, efforts to engender an appropriate level of state support should move forward relentlessly; this includes tapping the largest unrealized potential of all its lobbying resources--that of its students.




The University's increasingly esteemed reputation as a national leader in higher education should be further enhanced by the adoption of a more fitting name. This will increase awareness of and familiarity with the University's distinctiveness among employers, legislators, media, prospective students, prospective faculty, and others. This single critical step will fundamentally transform the manner in which the University is inherently perceived, with ramifications positively affecting all aspects of the institution's image.

One concern expressed by students regarding implementation of any future name revision regards public awareness of the change. The benefits of a new name will be maximized most effectively by an aggressive public relations campaign on all fronts. This should include the contracting of a private firm to publicize the change if necessary.

**The University and the Kirksville Community**

Building stronger bonds between the University and citizens of the surrounding area creates a mutually beneficial relationship. The institution provides cultural, educational, and entertainment opportunities to the local area, as well as a strong economic base. The Kirksville community in turn provides goods and services needed by the University and its students, including employment opportunities for undergraduates working their way through school. Enhanced coordination of University and city efforts in numerous areas, such as off-campus housing, will lead to a better environment for both groups. In almost all cases, this includes the increased involvement of students in constructing a more healthy relationship with the surrounding community.

# *Conclusion*

Having concluded a period of rapid programmatic change sparked by its new mission, the University must reach out to the future and focus its planning energies on becoming a leading institution of higher education for the twenty-first century. This includes the further development of its academic programs and careful yet progressive commitment of resources to facilities and technological needs. The combined efforts of all segments of the University Community will be required to ensure the institution successfully faces present and future challenges.

The change in mission was most completely implemented in the University's academic programs, though need for continued progress exists. Development of a more permanent and well-defined academic core will cement the University's identity as a Liberal Arts and Sciences institution, and further additions and modifications to its academic programs and policies will allow the University to better meet its goals. Continued pursuit of state-of-the-art facilities and technology should enhance the University's programs, providing the support necessary for students to thrive.

Incorporation of the student perspective by various means catalyzed the University's ascension to a highly selective and nationally ranked institution, and should continue to do so in the future. Pervasive use of assessment data in institutional decision making spawned dramatic improvements in the quality of both academic and co-curricular programs, and the further development and expanded use of the assessment program will allow the University to better meet existing and future challenges as well. An open and healthy relationship between the University and the Student Association, witnessed primarily with respect to student government organizations, provides a positive environment for meeting new challenges.

The success with which the institution met wholesale change in its fundamental mission and outlook in the past decade indicates both its readiness and ability to meet the challenges of the future. Firm dedication to a clear vision of the future and pursuit of steps necessary to realize it will ensure the University's continued success in providing a high-quality Liberal Arts and Sciences education to students.

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